

115 account intelligible we must anticipate certain later chapters to the extent of defining the terms *waruge* and *yaka*, that is we must refer briefly to the essential features of the Vedda social system and religion.

614 Every Vedda belongs to a *waruge* or clan, as the term may be translated, and among a large number of the Vedda communities still existing, exogamy is the absolute rule. Further, with exogamy is associated descent in the maternal line, so that the fundamentals of the social system of the Veddas may, perhaps, be summed up as a clan organization with female descent. There is no evidence, as far as we can determine, of any dual organization of the clans, but perhaps they had originally a territorial distribution. Ignoring for a moment such debatable matters, the Vedda clans are:—

- (1) Morane *waruge*.
- (2) Unapane *waruge*.
- (3) Namadewa or Nabudan *waruge*.
- (4) Aembela *waruge*.
- (5) Uru *waruge*.
- (6) Tala *waruge*.

(7) A number of other so-called *waruge* of minor strength and importance, which perhaps may be local groups that have forgotten their origin and have assumed a name (sometimes obviously a place-name) as a convenience.

769 Turning now to the Vedda religion the word *yaka* (feminine *yakini*, plural *yaku*) is used to denote the spirits of the dead, and since the Vedda religion is essentially a cult of the dead, it is not surprising that the propitiation of the spirits of dead relatives, called the Nae Yaku, is at once its most obvious and important feature. With this is associated the cult of the spirits of certain long dead Veddas who may be regarded as legendary heroes. The most important of these is Kande Yaka, the *yaka* of Kande Wanniya, a celebrated hunter who lived many generations ago and whose assistance is invoked for good hunting. Kande Yaka especially helps in the tracking of sambur and spotted deer, and with him is often associated Bilindi Yaka, the *yaka* of his younger brother Bilindi. When a deer has been killed the head is set aside, and with rice and

## PRESENT CONDITION

33

entirely in caves; trading places called *wadla* near the caves, but out of sight of them, under a tree or rock, were used for bartering, where all strangers would stop and shout and then wait until their calls had been answered from the caves.

The Veddas were extremely jealous of their women, and intimate as our informant was with them as a young man, he was never taken to their caves while their women were there. The wilder Veddas could not count, at least they used no numerals beyond one, the method being to say "one" "and one" "and one," etc., probably putting a piece of stick on the ground or making a mark for each unit mentioned. Both hands with fingers extended were held up for ten, or perhaps for any number above six. The "silent trade" was only a tradition even among the wildest Veddas and had probably been extinct in this part of the country for at least two generations. The wilder Veddas had no areca nuts but chewed the bark of trees mixed with lime which they obtained by burning land shells which they called *wantake*.

Cousin marriage took place, the unions being arranged by the parents of the young people. Honey, dried venison and flesh of the monitor lizard were brought by the young man to the girl's father<sup>1</sup>, who would call his daughter and give her in charge of her husband, for whom she would immediately make a waist string (*dis lannu*). She made no pretence of running away from her husband. Widows married an unmarried brother of their first husband if this were possible, in any case they might remarry and their sexual morality was as high as that of unmarried girls.

The wilder Veddas of the district belonged to the Morane and Unapane *waruge*; each clan had its own set of caves, though, since their members intermarried, there could have been no rigid exclusiveness about the arrangement. There were people of Uru *waruge* at a little distance; their status was lower than that of the Morane and Unapane folk, neither of whom would marry into this clan, and it was even said that the men of

<sup>1</sup> It was not clear whether more than one formal present of food was made; it must be remembered that a youth always gives part of any important kill to his potential father-in-law, cf. p. 67.

## THE VEDDAS

582 34  
 614  
 554 Uru *average* should carry game and honey for the men of Morane and Unapane.

291  
 184 Some of the village Veddas of those days had cloth, and when dancing to the *yaku* they wore the long cloth garment called *kangalla*; the wilder Veddas had no cloth and wore leaves, but it was not clear whether they had not also a certain amount of bark cloth which was their ordinary covering, and leaves may have been worn in addition when they invoked the *yaku*<sup>1</sup>.

685  
 609  
 778  
 826 The old man knew of the custom of a man keeping a piece of human liver in his betel pouch; it was universal and in his young days every Vedda desired to have a piece. Strangers, even Veddas, who intruded on the hunting grounds would be killed and their liver taken, no other part of the dead man being used, and the custom gave rise neither to warfare nor to vendettas<sup>2</sup>.

764  
 768 Caves in which a death occurred were deserted, the corpse being covered with leaves; perhaps men very near dissolution were left before death had actually occurred, but this did not seem certain. Bones found in the cave when the group returned to it after an interval of some ten or twelve years were thrown away quite carelessly. The spirits of the dead became the Nae Yaku who, with Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka, gave game and prosperity. The *kirikoraha* ceremony was performed for the Nae Yaku, and *adukku* (cooked food), which even in the old days consisted of coconut and rice, was offered to them. The wilder Veddas gave nothing to the Buddhist priests and made no offerings at shrines, nor did they know the Kataragam God, Kanda Swami, though the village Veddas worshipped him and knew that Walliame had been taken to wife by him, and honey was presented to the goddess at certain shrines, especially one at Kokote Sila, frequented by the village Veddas.

535  
 751 A few of the village Veddas would dance for the Sinhalese in order to protect their cattle, bring prosperity to their villages, and secure them from epidemics; they would dance *kolamadruwa* which the old man pointed out was derived from a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 213.<sup>2</sup> For details of this custom see Chapter VIII.

PRESENT CONDITION

37

361

511

Veddass are coming more and more in contact with their Sinhalese neighbours, and it is extremely unlikely that the next generation will remain pure.

We visited two of the nearest chena settlements of these people, the huts (Plate X, figure 1) were about as well built as those of the average Sinhalese chena, though the cultivation itself was certainly less systematic and orderly. The Namadewa folk lived in one settlement while the Morane and Unapane inhabited another.

361

Although all these Veddass have come in contact with the Sinhalese and are visited by Moormen hawkers for trade purposes—as indeed even the wildest have been for many generations—they have retained their old custom of not allowing the stranger in the midst of their settlement where he might meet their women. A rough shelter had been built at one corner of the Namadewa chena in which the pedlars sat and waited until the Vedda men came to bargain with them. Hence in the main these people have retained their old virtues of truthfulness, chastity and courtesy. The first, upon which practically every observer has remarked, was modified in a particular direction, for they all wished to show that they were pure-blooded Veddass of the Morane and Unapane clans, which were considered superior to the rest. So the Namadewa men lied freely, declaring that they belonged to Morane and Unapane, and one young man, otherwise a good informant, insisted that he was still unmarried, as he did not want to own that his wife was a Namadewa woman. Cases of intermarriage with Sinhalese were also emphatically denied, or only admitted after much cross-examination. Plate III represents a number of the men we met at Bendiagalge.

177

439

609

577

614

554

Danigala. The Danigala Veddass of the Nilgala district present a peculiar phase of the clash of civilization and barbarism. They are the classical "wild Veddass" of Ceylon described by so many travellers; their descent is pure but their own customs have been almost entirely forgotten, and are certainly ignored at the present day. They live in the park country, have a chena and a banana garden, and do a good trade in cattle both by herding for the Sinhalese, retaining every fifth calf as is the

101

178

541

231

115 putation when he first joined our party, but it was very soon evident that he was handier, quicker and more intelligent in every way than the other peasant Sinhalese with whom we came in contact. Still later we discovered that by his influence a large clearing had been illegally made in a remote part of the jungle near Nuwaragala, and that on account of this he was doing his best to prevent our coming in contact with the Sitala Wanniya Veddas in whose territory the clearing had been made. Although in this he played us false and caused much needless trouble we found him in other matters a perfectly trustworthy witness, and as he had associated more or less constantly with the Kovil Vanamai Veddas from the age of 10 to 20, there is every reason  
 161 to accept his account of their condition 25 years ago. At this  
 221 time there were about 50 families, i.e. some 200 people, who led  
 621 a wandering hunting life for half of the year, during which time they lived in rock shelters and depended largely on honey; for the rest of the year they paid more or less attention to chena cultivation, growing especially maize and *kurakkan* (*Elaeagnus coruana*). Two or three families—not necessarily the same year after year—would usually wander and hunt together; such groups of families might also make chenas together, though five or six families would often join to make a single chena.

222 Although they had a few guns even 20 years ago, bows and  
 411 arrows were in common use and much of their hunting consisted  
 423 of monkey drives. There were no mixed Sinhalese and Vedda  
 621 chenas then. The Arachi remembers three caves belonging to the ancestors of the present Bandaraduwa Veddas, viz. Walimbagalagalge, Ellaveilagalge and Vianbendegalge. Each family was the recognised possessor of one or more rocky hills on which there were colonies of the rock bee, but the whole of the small hunting community would join to collect honey from each hill and the honey was always equally shared.

614 The Kovil Vanamai Veddas belonged to Morane and Unapane and Uru *warag*. The latter lived apart near Uniche, i.e. between Tumpalamchola and the coast. The Arachi states  
 197 that the language has altered during the last 20 years, Tamil  
 123 tending to displace Sinhalese, this *Arachi*, "nothing," is said

PRESENT CONDITION

instead of *hadai*, *firu* being a Tamil word, so that a composite word meaning "really nothing" is now used.

At the present day there are probably no more than a dozen families left as representatives of the Kovil Vanamai Veddas and all of these live on Sinhalese chenas and are in dire poverty. The country has been referred to already as unhealthy, monkeys although abundant are not easily approached especially in the dry season, and other game is scarce. Isolated families have settled down in Sinhalese villages to pick up whatever living they can as occasional hired labourers, and some of these people were seen in a wretchedly starved condition. The most prosperous are three families living on the large Sinhalese chena (Plate XII, figure i) at Bandaraduwa near Devulani tank. But even with the assistance of the chena these people are not well off, and it appeared that they were no strangers to hunger. Owing to their position on the border of the Sinhalese and Tamil country, they had been influenced by both Hinduism and Buddhism to a certain extent. In spite of this they knew numerous Vedda songs and incantations, and the ceremonies following a death which occurred in the vicinity during our visit clearly demonstrated that foreign ideas formed but a thin stratum overlying their own beliefs.

The Unice Veddas were not seen in their own country but some men were brought to us by the Forest Ranger, Mr S. Perera, at Maha Oya, where the photograph shown in Plate XII was taken. We have no note that these Veddas were Uru *warag* men, but it seems probable that they represented the Uru *warag* community recorded (as mentioned by the Vedda *Arachi*) on the last page. They had retained their own customs and beliefs very largely and appeared to be living in a condition very similar to the people near Devulani, though perhaps they were better fed.

Sitala Wanniya. After visiting so many decaying or degenerate communities a refreshing state of affairs was found at Sitala Wanniya. Here there were at least four families who were living the life their forefathers had lived for generations without perceptible change. They still found game, honey and yams in quantities sufficient not only to support life, but to leave

43 147  
178

511  
[161]

177  
171

123  
614

511

511  
439

## PRESENT CONDITION

51

had actually been to the village. They had been sent for often to see others at Wewatte and Alutnuwara bungalows, and for even greater folk had been taken to Kandy. And so they had learnt to shake hands and had picked up exaggerated ideas of their own importance and the value of their information, and expected a present for every remark they vouchsafed. It was a horrible change from the courteous behaviour of the Sitala Wanniya cave Veddas.

As the Dambani folk were so very unfriendly we began to hope the carriers would not come at all that night, there was nowhere for them to sleep, and we thought the Veddas might resent their presence. They told us repeatedly that "Sinhalese men would not dare to come to their village," in spite of the fact that there were two petty Sinhalese traders in the village at the time, who did not even trouble to go away before dark, but seemed naturally to expect a night's lodging, which was granted them without any fuss, and there appeared to be no difficulty about language with them. About six o'clock our servants and the carriers arrived, and curiously enough instead of resenting the intrusion the Veddas seemed very impressed by their number, and presumably our importance, in having so many dependents, for they became much more friendly.

The next morning early, we set the phonograph going with a Veddā song: immediately the whole village crowded round us, intensely interested. They recognised the song and said it was very good. The Vidane then sang a song into the machine and was quite excited to hear it repeated, but again began his demand for presents although besides a rupee we had now given white cloth to him and the other men from whom we had got vocabularies. Having obtained records we realised that it was impossible to do any good work among such spoilt people and decided to go to Belligala. We offered some beads to the headman's wife, but she said the string was not long enough; this annoyed us and we asked her if she would prefer not to have any, and on her repeating they were not enough we put them away.

The Dambani men said they did not know to which *maraga*

• 614 they belonged, which suggested to us that perhaps they belonged to Uru ~~swage~~ or one of the other clans which are considered of inferior status. Although the Arachi of Belligala did not know their ~~swage~~ and believed that they had really forgotten them themselves, our opinion was confirmed by information obtained later from the Arachi of Alutnuwara who said that they were of the Uru and Namadewa ~~swage~~, while a Vedda of Horabera-wewa told us that his mother came from Dambani and she was a Namadewa woman.

576  
609 As the Arachi of Belligala assured us the Bulugahaladana Veddans lived in a condition precisely similar to those of Dambani, we did not visit their village but arranged for two of them to visit us at Belligala; they greeted us in the same way as the Dambani folk, with loud and guttural voices, accentuating all the "chi," and shook hands. They brought some honey and yama. They said they could not bring ~~Dambani~~ honey (for it was too early in the year) so they had brought honey from the stingless bee. After a little while they gradually dropped their guttural tones, especially when they were speaking to the villagers and not to us; their voices, naturally deep, assumed a sing-song tone not unlike that of Nila of Sitala Wanniya. We consider that the gruffness of these Veddans is almost entirely affectation. They have been expected to be sullen and morose and never to laugh. For thirty years the Arachi of Belligala has acted as "show-man" to the Veddans of his district, and he always speaks to them in their "language" in similar or even fiercer tones, and he has shown them so many white men that he has quite lost count of their number. He has thus helped to keep up the fiction of "wildness," for these Veddans are not wild since they are not shy but come up, shake hands, ask for presents, and offer to dance.

178 We believe that they keep up few, if any, of the old Vedda customs; they cultivate chenas and keep cattle, their bows and arrows are probably more for show than use, for the Arachi told us that some of them possess guns while others go to the Sinhalese and borrow them. Deschamps says that Veddans never laugh nor have they ever been seen to smile. Of course this is not true of the Veddans of Nilgala, nor do we think it is true of

## PRESENT CONDITION

57

they saved a little money and bought a patch of land of about 11 acres from Government, which land they now cultivate with paddy.... There are sixteen houses in the Vedda Settlement of Rotawewa, and the householders in every case are descendants of Veddas. They are Sinhalese without any signs of Tamil admixture."

They say they are of the Morane *swage*, and they seem not to know any other *swage*. Mr Horsburgh however states that "there is one other Vedda village in Sinhala Pattuwa besides Rotawewa, viz. Gallinda, with about three families who are the same people as those of Rotawewa."

As a matter of convenience we have prepared a tabular summary of the conditions prevailing at the various settlements of wild and village Veddas that we visited. Besides those mentioned, many other families and even isolated individuals exist scattered throughout the Vedirata, especially in the neighbourhood of the Badulla-Batticaloa road near Maha Oya and Kallodi. These folk are in the last stage of degeneration, having given up their own wandering life and habits; they have mostly drifted into Sinhalese villages there to die out miserably.

105  
121

[617]

105  
177  
511

601 such favourite names as Kaira, Poromala and Handuna leads to  
 551 confusion, not only in the minds of strangers, but also we believe  
 in the minds of the Veddas themselves.

601 Sinhalese who come in contact with the Veddas find the same  
 difficulty, and the individuals of certain communities, e.g.  
 551 Danigala, have each a Sinhalese name by which they are known  
 197 to the peasant Sinhalese, and which in many instances they  
 themselves recognise, so that some Veddas actually know each  
 other by these Sinhalese names, and give them when asked their  
 own names or those of their companions. This is the explanation  
 of the majority of Sinhalese names occurring in the  
 601 genealogies. Again, the fact that among the Veddas there is  
 no system of hereditary chieftainship, or any other custom such  
 622 as the vendetta, forcing a man to know and remember his grand-  
 628 fathers, cannot but have assisted to bring about the forgetfulness  
 of previous generations, which with the rarest exceptions makes  
 everyone entirely ignorant of his grandparents. In the case of  
 the Danigala and Henebedda Veddas there was an additional  
 difficulty to be met in conducting our investigations. The men  
 601 of these communities who for the most part belonged to the  
 614 Morane and Unāpane clans, traditionally the proudest and most  
 554 important of the Vedda *waruvs*, had to a certain extent inter-  
 married with Sinhalese and also with the Veddas of Namadewa  
 clan, a *waruv* which in this part of the country is regarded as  
 of inferior status. They are most anxious to conceal instances  
 of both these classes of marriage and lied freely concerning them  
 and this is the reason for certain lacunae in their genealogies,  
 which in the case of the Danigala community could not have  
 been given at all had not Mr Bibile's position as Ratamahat-  
 maya, i.e. hereditary overlord or "laird" of this part of the  
 country, enabled him to make inquiries from the surrounding  
 peasantry, and thus check, and in many instances correct, the  
 information we obtained from the Veddas themselves.

621 A Vedda community consists of from one to five families  
 who share the rights of hunting over a tract of land, of gathering  
 honey upon it, fishing its streams, and using the rock shelters.  
 But the whole of the community does not commonly move about  
 its territory as one band, it is far more common to find only the

601

576

Terms of respect were commonly used in addressing the aged, thus although *siya* or *mutta* really mean father or grandfather, these words might be used as terms of respect in addressing any old man, and in the same way the terms *kiriamma* (grand-mother) or *atta* might be used to any old woman, and we were told that *siya* was constantly used by members of the group in addressing the "senior" or patriarch. An individual of either sex would call his or her father-in-law's father *siya* or *kiriappa*, and a mother-in-law's mother is addressed as *kiriamma*.

#### CLAN ORGANIZATION.

614

178

It has already been mentioned that (the Veddas at the present day are divided into clans) (*waruge*); almost every man who calls himself a Vedda can give the name of his *waruge* and this applies even to many village and coast Veddas in whom there is a minimum of true Vedda blood. The clan organization of the Veddas was first pointed out by Nevill, who says: "The Veddas north of the Mahawaeli Ganga have lost their original divisions... and reduced to a few isolated families.... The Vaeddias known as coast Vaeddias have abandoned most of their ancestral customs and I cannot even ascertain from them their original name. Vaeddias of the forest districts do not preserve any tradition of relationship with these Vaeddias of the coast." Nevill then gives the following nine names as those of the Vedda clans, to which he adds the Veddas of Tambalagama Pattu, Kattakulam Pattu and Anurajapura as true Veddas though their *waruge* names seem lost.

614

1. Morana waruge.
2. Unapana waruge.
3. Bandara or Rugam waruge.
4. Namada, Namadana or Nabadana waruge.
5. Ura-wadiya waruge.
6. Uruwa waruge.
7. Kowil waname.
8. Aembala or Ambala waruge.
9. Tala waruge.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

71

In this list no account is taken of the coast Veddas, of whom <sup>614</sup> Nevill says that they "evidently belong to several distinct sections.... Only the old men speak what they call Vaedda, which is pure but quaint Sinhalese with a Vedda accent, as a rule, though mixed with some words characteristic of true Vaedda.... The Vaeddass say they never were related to these Coast Vaeddass, and do not know when they came to the coast, or where they came from, nor did they ever hear that they belonged to any *waruge* of the race.

"The Coast Vaeddass do not know when they came, or how they came, but they say that long ago their ancestors came from the Gala, far beyond the hills to the west."

The Doctors Sarasin state that they attempted to map the territorial distribution of the clans given by Nevill, but on account of the vagueness of his statement were unable to do this. With regard to Nevill's clans we must point out that his 5th, 6th, 7th clan names are open to criticism. *Kovil waname* is a descriptive term meaning "temple precincts" and, as has already been stated, is the general name for certain Veddas who live in the Eastern Province in the neighbourhood of Devulani tank and who belong to the Morane and Unapane *waruge*. It was formerly the general name for the Veddas who lived in the neighbourhood of the Kataragam temple in the extreme south of Uva.

As for Nevill's Ura-wadiya *waruge* and Uruwa *waruge*, these are not two *waruge* each having one of these names but are other names for the Ura *waruge* mentioned on p. 33. The nine clans given by Nevill are thus reduced to seven and, as will be shown later, there is every reason to believe that this number must be still further reduced by the exclusion of Rugam, i.e. Bandara *waruge*, from the list.

We may now give the distribution of the *waruge* as determined by ourselves.

Morane. This clan is found at Nilgala, Henebedda, Bandatadawa (Kovil Vannamai Veddas), Sitala Wanniya, Godatalawa (Galmede Veddas), and among the Mudugala Veddas now settled at Unuwatura Babula, as well as among many of the last

614

remains of the Veddās who lead a miserable existence in the neighbourhood of the Badulla-Batticaloa road between Kallodi and Maha Oya. The Morane clan probably also exists at Bingoda near Mullagama, and a few Morane people are to be found among the village Veddās of Tamankaduwa. There is, however, reason to believe that this clan has been recently introduced from Omuni, where there are many people who in spite of the Sinhalese blood in their veins say they belong to Morane *waruge*.

Unapane. The distribution of this clan is the same as Morane, and judging from the fact that all the Bingoda people we met said they were Unapane, it must be especially strong there.

Namadewa. This clan is found at Henebedda where that part of the jungle known as Kolombedda was pointed out as their property, and among the village Veddās in Uva Bintenne (Dambani, Bulugahaladena, Girandura). It also occurs in Tamankaduwa where it was one of the chief *waruge* of Elakotalliya, Kalukalaaba and Yakure.

Uru. This clan is found at Uniche among the village Veddās of Bintenne and Tamankaduwa and among the coast Veddās. Its name was known to the Sitala Wanniya Veddās and to many of the small settlements in the neighbourhood of Maha Oya.

Aembala. Some of the coast Veddās say they are of this clan which is also found in Tamankaduwa, at Yakure and Ulpota. The name of this *waruge* was known to the Sitala Wanniya Veddās.

Tala. This clan was only known at Yakure.

The distribution of Namadewa, Uru, Aembala and Tala *waruge* described above agrees with that given by Nevill.

Besides the *waruge*, the distribution of which has just been described, certain other alleged *waruge* were mentioned to us. In some instances it was certain that these were merely groups of people who were named after the locality they now live in or formerly inhabited. The most important of these territorial names was Rugam. The Rugam *waruge* was accounted an offshoot of Morane, and since Rugam is the name of a large and important tank some 12 miles from Maha Oya where Veddās

## SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

73

were formerly numerous, it seems reasonable to suppose that Rugam *waruge* was originally a local group called after the territory they inhabited. 614 ●

Dehigama is another *waruge* name given as one to which a small number of Veddass of Uva Bintenne belonged and is avowedly a place name.

Bendiya was also given as a *waruge* name and perhaps is also a place name.

With regard to the origin of the names of the genuine Vedda *waruge*, the only hint that any of them are recognised by Veddass as springing from place names was that conveyed by the statement of a number of Morane men that their ancestors came from Moranegala in the Eastern Province, but no Unapane man ever suggested that his clan had originally come from the place of that name near Kallodi. Moranegala is a hill name, and probably the hill has been named from the *mora* trees (*Nephelium longana*) which it may be assumed grew there, so that Moranegala means "the hill of the *mora* trees," and it might be argued that Morane *waruge* derived its name from the *mora* tree. Some support for this argument might be adduced from the fact that in songs collected at Sitala Wanniya both men and women of Morane *waruge* are addressed as "*mora* flowers." We were unable to discover that any Veddass had legends of the origin of their clans, but this is not to be wondered at in view of the almost total absence of myths among them. The Sinhalese on the other hand have legends of origin for four of the Vedda clans, and these legends, varying only slightly in form, can be collected from the Sinhalese all over the Vedda country. This, as well as the fact that Mr Bibile heard most of them many years ago from his father, show that they are not of recent origin, or invented for the benefit of European inquirers. 773

With the exception of the legend of the origin of Morane *waruge* given by Mr H. Horsburgh the accounts here given of the origin of the Vedda clans were obtained from the Vedda Arachi of Potuliyadde, but the same stories with only slight variations were also obtained from the Lindegala "Veddass" and the Arachi of Belligala. 614 773

Mr Horsburgh obtained his account of the origin of Morane

614  
773

*waruge* from the "Veddas" of Rotawewa—a rice-growing village in Sinhala Pattuwa of Tamankaduwa, the inhabitants of which say they are descendants from Veddas—although all accounts show that they are indistinguishable from their Sinhalese neighbours. "When Kuveni was abandoned by Vijaya she returned with her two children, a boy and girl, to her own people, who killed her. Her children fled to the jungle and lived on the fruits of the '*mora*' tree. One of their children came to Minneriya and founded the Minneriya (now Rotawewa) Veddas of the Morane Waruge." We have not visited these people but it may be assumed that they are at least as sophisticated as the "Veddas" of Yakure.

Unapane. Unapane *waruge* is an offshoot from Morane. A chief's daughter was given to another chief's son. When going to the bridegroom's cave the girl got thirsty on the way and the only water available was a minute trickle down the face of a rock. The man allowed this to soak into a piece of cloth which he squeezed into a bamboo from which the girl drank. This is the origin of the name from *una* "bamboo" and *pane* "water," and the descendants of this couple were called Unapane.

Uru. A Morane girl became pregnant and refused to give the name of her lover. She was beaten and driven away from the group and brought forth her child in a hole dug by a wild boar, *uru*, hence the name Uru *waruge*.

Aembala. Aembala *waruge* has sprung from Unapane. An Unapane girl's husband died while she was pregnant, and all her other relations were dead. When her child was born she left it under a tree while she went to dig yams. On her return she found that red ants (*aembaleo*) had blinded her child, whence the child was called Aembeli, and her descendants formed Aembala clan.

Namadewa. An Aembala woman brought forth a female child under a *namada* tree; this girl was therefore named Namadi and from her descendants arose the Namadewa clan.

582  
611 Exogamy prevails among the Veddas of Bintenne and Tamankaduwa and clan descent is matrilineal. These conditions also prevail at Godatalawa and therefore must be assumed to have existed at Galmede whence the Godatalawa family had

## SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

75

come, but strangely this and the nearly related Sitala Wanniya Veddas were the only communities to the east of the Badulla-Batticaloa road in which exogamy prevailed. The Henebedda and Kovil Vanamai Veddas all married freely within the clan. It is, however, probable that this is a recent though not quite modern innovation, since at Henebedda it was said that it was particularly fitting that Morane and Unapane should intermarry. 582 611

Nevill recognised the existence of exogamy, and presumably it was of the Bintenne Veddas that he made the following very definite statement, which applies equally well to the condition of things existing at the present day, even among such sophisticated folk as those of Omuni, where genealogies were taken in order to make quite certain of this matter. "The rule for marriage was stringent. The daughter represents her mother's family, the son also represents his mother's family. In no case did a person marry one of the same family, even though the relationship was lost in remote antiquity. Such a marriage is incest. The penalty for incest is death. Thus the daughter must marry either her father's sister's son, or her mother's brother's son, neither of whom would be of the same clan name. Failing these she may marry any of their name, and should no such bridegroom be available, marriage into a third family becomes necessary". 582

If the distribution of these Vedda communities in which exogamy prevails be studied on the map it will be seen that with the exception of the Sitala Wanniya and Godatalawa (Galmede) groups all the Veddas to the west of the Badulla-Batticaloa road are exogamous, whereas those to the east of the road contract marriage within the clan. [184]

As a matter of convenience we now give a list complementary to that on pp. 71 to 74 showing what *waru* were represented in each of the communities we visited. Danigala: Morane, Unapane, Namadewa (the last not acknowledged). Henebedda: Morane, Unapane, Namadewa (the latter properly forming the Kolombedda community and settlement). Kovil Vanamai (Bandaraduwa): Morane, Unapane, Uru (the latter forming the settlement at Uniche). In all these settlements marriage occurs within the clan. 614 582

614

Sitala Wanniya. The Sitala Wanniya people said that Morane and Unapane were the only *waruge* of which they had any first-hand knowledge. They had, however, heard that formerly three other *waruge* called Uru, Kabela and Acmbala existed, and that the folk of these *waruge* were of lower status than the people of Morane and Unapane.

Godatalawa (Galmede). These people all belonged to Morane and Unapane *waruge*.

[582  
611]

Unuwatura Bubula. The *waruge* of this settlement were Morane, Unapane and Bandara *waruge*. Exogamy was strictly adhered to, and the children took their mother's *waruge*. As far as we could determine, all the poverty-stricken Veddas settled on chenas in the neighbourhood of Kallodi and Maha Oya on the Badulla-Batticaloa road belonged either to Morane, Unapane, Bandara (Rugam) or Uru *waruge*, the Morane and Unapane Veddas of the large chena settlement at Rerenkadi holding the last to be of inferior status.

[611]

Lindegala. Three men, the last remains of the Lindegala Veddas, visited us at Kallodi. The oldest of these, the possessor of the *ande* with inlaid silver work referred to on p. 171, was a rather tall stoutly built man who looked like a Sinhalese. He, however, remembered his *waruge* Morane and stated that his wife belonged to Bandara *waruge* and one of his companions who belonged to this *waruge* had a wife belonging to Morane *waruge*. It was stated that children took their mother's *waruge*.

614  
582

Elakotaliya. The *waruge* of this settlement are Namadewa, Uru and Rugam; exogamy was insisted on, and in all the nine marriages of which we have notes the contracting parties were of different *waruge*. In seven cases Uru and Namadewa *waruge* intermarried, in one instance Namadewa and Rugam *waruge*, while in the last instance the *waruge* of the woman was uncertain. Although it was clearly stated that the children should take their father's *waruge*, it was certain that in some cases they took their mother's *waruge*.

[611]

It was said that a man should marry his father's sister's daughter and not his mother's brother's daughter but we could not establish this.

Kalukalaeba. Morane, Namadewa, Uru and Rugam *waruge*

## SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

77

are represented in this settlement. Although in conversation no importance was attached to exogamy this must be taken to exist since all of the ten marriages recorded are exogamous. These include six marriages of Morane with Namadewa *waruge*, two of Morane and Uru *waruge* and one each of Morane and Rugam *waruge* and of Rugam and Namadewa *waruge*. Children take their mother's *waruge*.

Yakure. The *waruge* existing here are Namadewa, Aembala, Bendia, Rugam and Tala. Uru *waruge* was known by name but not otherwise, Dehigama was recognised as belonging to the Uva Bintenne and Morane *waruge* as existing in the neighbourhood of Omuni. Exogamy was the rule and occurred in every marriage (8) of which we have records. *Waruge* descent should be in the female line but in some instances children took their father's *waruge*. Seeking to elucidate this matter it was said that whereas girls took their mother's *waruge* boys took their father's, but this rule certainly did not hold in all cases<sup>1</sup>. Cousin marriage was said to be the old custom, but it was admitted that at the present day this custom was more often neglected than observed.

Ulpota. This is said to be the most important of four small settlements of village Veddas in the neighbourhood of Dimbulagala (Gunner's Quoin). These settlements are Ulpota, Kohombolewa, Alagonagoda and Gonandamene all of which, according to Mutua our informant, consist of a small number (Kohombolewa eight, Gonandamene three) of huts. Mutua, who said that he was headman of the Tamankaduwa Veddas, gave the *waruge* of these settlements as Rugam, Aembala and Morane; the last being to his mind less numerous and less important than the others. The conditions as regards *waruge* descent and exogamy are the same as at Yakure. Of fifteen marriages recorded eleven are between individuals of Rugam and Aembala

<sup>1</sup> We may here refer to a statement made while we were investigating this matter at Yakure. "Properly speaking there are no *waruge* among the Veddas, who are only classified into *waruge* for the purpose of marriage." We could not determine what was in our informant's mind, and although we were subsequently told the same by the Ulpota Veddas we could not obtain any light on the subject from either community.

78

THE VEDDAS

614  
582  
611

*waruge*, the remaining four between Morane and Aembala (2) or Rugam (2) *waruge*.

Dambani. These extremely sophisticated Veddass probably belong to Namadewa *waruge* and descent is probably matrilineal.

614

Malgode (Horaborawewa). Our informants knew of Namadewa, Dehigama and Kapatu *waruge* and no others, but when Morane *waruge* was mentioned to them one man stated that he had heard of a *waruge* of that name.

[582  
611]

Girandura. Here too exogamy prevailed though children took their father's *waruge*, and we could discover no exception to these rules. The marriages we could trace took place between Dehigama and Namadewa *waruge*, and between Dehigama and Uru *waruge*, we consequently assume that these are the *waruge* represented in this community.

THE COMPARATIVE STATUS OF THE CLANS.

614  
554

The members of the Morane and Unapane clans generally considered themselves superior to the Namadewa, Uru and Aembala *waruge*. This feeling was so strong at Henebedda that much difficulty was at first experienced in collecting genealogies. Representatives of the Morane, Unapane and Namadewa clans were for the time living together at Bendiyaalge caves, and the difference in status between the Morane and Unapane on the one hand, and Namadewa on the other, was felt so strongly that the members of the last-mentioned *waruge* invariably denied their clan, while the Morane and Unapane

[582]

folk said the Namadewa were their servants. It seemed clear that in the old days Morane and Unapane folk never married into one of the servile clans, but two or three such marriages had taken place within recent years, and in every case these marriages were at first denied. The most striking proof of this feeling was evinced when we had come to know all the members of the community and pretence had been largely given up; Sita Wanniya and Poromala our usual guides, both Morane men, led us one day to the Namadewa chena. The Namadewa men immediately began an angry protest. "These people," they said, meaning Poromala and Sita Wanniya, "call us Namadewa; it

## SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

79

is not so, we are as good as they," and again on leaving they declared that even if they were not Morane folk they were certainly as good, for had not the eldest born of Kaira the patriarch of Dasigala, a Morane man, married a woman from their family? This last statement was proved to be true by the genealogy. As neither we nor our guides said anything to provoke these remarks the intensity of the feeling cannot be doubted. At Bandaraduwa there were only Morane and Unapane men, but they said that Uru *warugs* were their servants, and that some people of this clan lived near Uniche; Wannaku seen later was doubtless one of these. At the chena settlement at Rerankadi one woman said the Uru *warugs* were "dirty" people. This was one of the first Vedda communities we visited, and the significance of the remark was not realised at the time. At Dambani the people professed to have forgotten their *warug*; we therefore surmised that they might belong to one of the inferior clans, and later at Horaborawewa a Vedda boy said his mother was a Namadewa woman from Dambani. Additional evidence in support of this view was furnished by the statements of the Alutanwara Arachi recorded on p. 52.

The services that the inferior clans were said to render to other clans were as follows: when big game was shot and fish caught the Namadewa men must carry it, and they must make the creeper ladders for gathering rock honey. How much of this work was really done by Namadewa people is extremely difficult to say, it is scarcely credible that when living apart from the servile class the Morane and Unapane men would send for them to carry a kill, but when Poromala of Henebedda (Morane) had killed a deer and cut it up on the *talawa* near our camp, it was noticed that Kalua, a Namadewa boy who had not been hunting, came down from the cave and carried back the greater part of the meat.

## THE TERRITORIAL GROUPING OF THE CLANS.

Although at the present day it cannot be said that a territorial grouping of the clans certainly exists, or ever existed, there is considerable evidence that this once prevailed. We

614  
554

614

- 614 would in the first place refer to what we have already stated to be the geographical distribution of the clans at the present day. The fact that Unapane *waruge*, so important to the east of the Badulla-Batticaloa road and in its immediate vicinity to the west, is absent in Tamankaduwa is extremely suggestive, as is the limited distribution and importance of Morane *waruge* in Tamankaduwa. The existence of only one known Tala *waruge* centre (Yakure) and the limited distribution of Aembala *waruge* which, as far as we can determine, only exists in the country round Gunner's Quoin and among the coast Veddas who have avowedly come from inland, points in the same direction, as does the name Rugam *waruge* derived from the country round the tank of that name and often applied to a sub-group of Morane who are also called Bandara *waruge*. Turning now to evidence of a rather different nature our old Kandyan informant, whose statements have been quoted at length on pp. 29 to 34, was very emphatic in assuring us that the local representatives of Morane and Unapane clans, the two *waruge* with which he was well acquainted in his youth, each had their own territory and caves, and even at the present day the information we were able to gather strongly pointed to Bingoda being an old centre of the Unapane clan, while Danigala was probably a Morane centre. Again Kolombedda was quite definitely said to be the Namadewa territory, and the Bandaraduwa community stated that a certain area in the neighbourhood of Uniche was the domain of the local group of the Uru *waruge*.

## COAST VEDDAS

333

There are a few Verdas at Panichchenkeni, while near Vakarai still further to the north there is a Verda settlement of considerable size. Some eight miles beyond this are two Verda settlements Parchenai and Nargantonai situated close together. We heard of other smaller settlements of Coast Veddas in the neighbourhood of Batticaloa, but these were not visited as time was short and it appeared that those Verdas we did not see differed in no respect from those we met. We were told that formerly there were Coast Veddas south of Batticaloa and we later discovered that there were, and still are, certain shrines or temples within a few miles of the coast (e.g. at Mandur), which were generally recognised as Vedda shrines at which Veddas especially worshipped. This matter has been alluded to in Chapter VIII, and here it is only necessary to point out that the religion of the Coast Veddas is strongly tinged with Tamil customs and beliefs; indeed, many Verdas had Hindu sect marks upon their foreheads. 361

Some, but not all, of the Coast Veddas know the names of the *waruge* to which they belong, and a few also know the names of some of the more important *waruge* of the Veddas inland. Uru *waruge* appears to be the *waruge* to which most of the Coast Veddas who remembered their ancestral *waruge* belonged, but a few men stated that they belonged to Ogamam, Kavatham, Umata or Umatam, Aembalaneduwe and Aembale *waruge*; the last named and the one before it probably being the same as the Aembela *waruge* found inland. Some of the Coast Veddas whom we questioned said they had heard of, and still knew of certain of the old Vedda *waruge*, and such men were generally able to mention Morane *waruge* while fewer also knew of Unapane *waruge*. 614.

The Coast Veddas have become expert fishermen and make and use various forms of nets including a cast net. They also spear and shoot fish, using a bifid iron spear-head which they have adopted from the Tamils. For shooting fish they use the usual Vedda bow, but the arrow has become a harpoon with a shaft as long as the bow into which the iron with its running line fits loosely. One of the nets used by the Coast Veddas is seen drying behind the house in the background of Plate LXIX, 226 227 411 227

334

227

411

186

611

● 614  
582

262

[235]



[113]

Fig. 13. Verda bow and  
harpoon  $\times 7\frac{1}{2}$ .  
Iron harpoon head  $\times 3$ .

## THE VEDDAS

fig. 2, while Mr Storey's book contains an excellent photograph of these people spearing fish<sup>1</sup>.

The length of the Verda bow and harpoon shaft shown in fig. 13 are 208 cm. and 220 cm. respectively. The bow is an extremely powerful weapon, its diameter at its thickest part being about 3.3 cm.

In spite of the perfectly obvious fact that the majority of the Veddas are more Tamil than Vedda the old Vedda pride of blood survives and some of the older Veddas denied that they intermarried with Tamils.

Children of marriages in which the *waruge* of the contracting parties were known took their father's *waruge*, but it seemed to be a matter of no account whether or no individuals of the same *waruge* intermarried.

Everyone avoids eating fowl and all our informants both male and female denied that they ever ate it, though often suggesting that others might do so. On the other hand, one informant who bred fowls for sale summed the matter up with an emphatic "Veddas don't eat fowls." No reason was given for this abstinence but all agreed that their ancestors had not eaten fowl, though the majority of our informants admitted that they would breed fowls for sale and kill and prepare fowls for others to eat. Beef was said to be generally avoided though it was not

<sup>1</sup> *Hunting and Shooting in Ceylon*, London, 1907.

197 recognize a single expression. The following morning I taxed  
198 the people with speaking in Vedda language, but they stoutly  
declared that they could only speak Sinhalese.

[177]  
[178] In my opinion the majority of the people of the Maha  
Wedirata are of Vedda origin, but have discarded their  
primitive customs as they dwindled in numbers, and while  
other causes, such as marriage with neighbouring people,  
tended to still further break down the older customs of the  
isolated clans that made up the Vedda race as a whole, they  
still clung in secret to the language of their forefathers, as a  
binding link and a means of private communication.

115 At Salavai, in the Panawa Pattu, I found one family who  
admitted that their grandfather was a real Vedda, belonging  
to one of the clans occupying the country on the confines of  
the Kumbukkan river.

From the oldest member of this family I obtained a mass  
of information respecting the habits and customs of the Vedda  
people.

● 614 According to this individual, who has adopted the Sinhalese  
[553] name of Dissan Hamy, the Veddas were divided up into a  
number of waruge or clans, each of which occupied and  
hunted over a specific area of country, and had no connection  
with the others who lived as separate communities.

The members of each clan were more or less related, and  
previous to the disintegration of the Veddas as a race, they  
could not marry any but members of the same waruge.

[462] They lived by hunting, in which only the males took part.  
Their habitations were caves, and occasionally leaf shelters,  
but the latter was uncommon.

562 The females were kept in a state of rigid subjection to the  
593 males, and could not take part in the chase, ordinary  
ceremonials, or conversation with any but those who were  
immediate relations, or the closest relatives of the husband.

562 If the husband was pleased to throw some meat to his wife,  
593 as part of his spoil in the chase, that was all the woman was  
224 entitled to. She could not claim a share simply because she  
was the man's wife.

291 Under ordinary circumstances, both the males and females  
824 were naked, assuming only for special occasions a loin cloth

524 According to my authority the Veddas indulged in no games, unless, indeed, the custom of tossing dry leaves in the air and speculating on their position when they fell back upon the ground could be called a game. This, I am told, was only an occasional recreation, and indulged in by boys alone.

423  
● 614  
628 The limits of the hunting ground were jealously guarded by the Veddas, and anything like poaching by the members of one clan in the area recognized as belonging to another was punishable by death. Should a hunter lose his way and fall into the hands of a neighbouring clan, he would be closely watched, remaining for the time being in a sort of captivity. If the man's conduct during that time was such as to disarm suspicion he was permitted to go, and might even be accompanied to the confines of the clan's hunting ground, but he would have to proceed at once without looking back, or his conduct might lead to the belief that he was a spy, with fatal consequences.

226 The method of fishing was to hem in a piece of water by closely fencing in both ends of the stream. People would then enter the enclosed piece of water, armed with slender sticks, thrashing the water therewith till a fish was actually struck, when it would be captured. I saw this actually done in one pool on the Kumbukkan.

173 My informant told me that the Veddas were at one time harassed by a race of pygmy people, called the Nittawo, who lived in the country known as Lenama, that extended from Bagura in the Panawa Pattu in the east to the confines of the Kattaragama hills on the west.

According to him, these people lived in small troops of from 10 to 40, inhabiting caves, hollow trees, and crevices of precipices. They were about 3 feet or a little more in height, exactly like normal human beings, only in miniature. Their legs were hairy like those of the Wanduroo; they walked erect, and had no tails.

Their arms were short and very powerful, with strong hands, and talon-like finger-nails with which they tore and disembowelled whatever they captured. These generally were small animals, such as hare, mouse-deer, monkeys, iguanas, and tortoises. Their method of attack was by surrounding

- 582 The correct Vedda marriage is that between the children of a brother and sister. A marriage between children of two brothers or of two sisters is regarded as incest. And here their standard is higher than ours.
- 635
- 587 Marriage for the Vedda is a very simple affair. Suthubanda, for instance, espoused a widow in his household. When she was freed by the death of her husband, it was right that he should take her, and he made no demur, though she was old and ugly and he young and robust.
- 583 Kaurala went to the younger of his two wives with a length of cloth, a bead necklace, a bangle and two hair pins, and brought her away. Gama, whose wife was an orphan of Henebedde, did much the same. But the rule is that a man should cast in his lot with his wife's people. Then, the morning after marriage the pair go into the jungle and bring home, it may be a *kanava* comb, a monitor lizard, or some yams, and thus the common life begins.
- 91
- 585 The waist-string plays as important a part in Vedda matrimony as does the ring in ours. When a woman has tied round the waist of a man a string of her own twisting, he becomes her husband. This string, some six encircling loops, lasting practically a life-time, is made of *niyande* (bow-string hemp), the long bayonet-shaped leaf of which is shredded to fibre by being drawn repeatedly between the palm of the hand and a bare branch.
- 291
- [283] 586 Divorce is as informal as marriage; the woman being merely returned to her parents or requested to go to whomsoever she chooses. But the Vedda is not, as a rule, unreasonably capricious in the exercise of his power; he has too great a sense of responsibility and of fair-play towards the mother of his children and partner in his toil. A lad I knew blew out his chest with a gun, from remorse at having taken to himself two sisters who continually quarrelled with each other over his affections.
- 762
- 593 A Vedda will not hesitate to chastise his spouse when necessary; but that, after all, is only a mark of affection! We saw one belabour his wife unmercifully because she would not let him accompany us; she took all the beating she got, but had her own way in the end.
- 551 These people do not address their women-folk by name. Ask a man to name his children, and he will stutter and stumble at the task. A Vedda hails his wife somewhat as follows: "What are you doing there? Come here and break my head." This apparently suicidal request is only his way of requesting her to perform the delightful uxorial duty of cleansing his hair of vermin.
- 515
- 64 The Veddass of Bingoda claim to be of the Morana *warage*, the best Vedda clan. Those of Danigala, of the Unapane clan, come next. But for the Veddass of Henebedde the Bingoda folk profess diadain, calling them *Uro* (swine) and *Waliyo*, and saying it was their duty in old-time to pour water on the Morana's hands when they had fed. How much water these Moranas themselves use we have yet to learn; for, if the saying be true, that the worse the odour the better the Vedda, then the Veddass of Bingoda are aristocrats. What a thing is human nature after all, when even this wretched little remnant of humanity, without a rag to their bodies claim social precedence over each other?
- 64
- 173 There are nine Vedda clans or *warages*; and each has its own story: The Morana *warage* was so called by a Sinhalese king who yearned for the move fruit when it was out of season, and had his want proclaimed.

## BINGODA HOMES

67

A Vedda woman, who had preserved bunches of the fruit in a pot of honey, was able to provide them; and so earned the name of her tribe. The Unapana waruge, like all the other waruges, also owed its name to a woman. She, when a king was out hunting in a parched land, supplied him with drink by squeezing out her dew-drenched cloth! Thirst apparently destroys the fastidiousness even of kings. The Rugam waruge derives from an incident connected with the building of the bund of Rugam tank. After its completion, this earth-work used to break down with the yearly floods despite all efforts at consolidating it. The Sinhalese king of the time had a vision one night telling him, that if a pregnant woman were built alive into the bund, it would ever after remain intact. A Vedda woman was sacrificed, and her clan received the name of the tank. The Uru waruge was called after a child-birth in a pig's hole; the Tala waruge after such an episode in a talawa or glade; the Nabudena, Kiribo and Embille waruges after similar occurrences under nabudu, kiribo and embille trees respectively. The Veddas being nomadic these incidents are common. Gama, as we have seen, owed his name to being born on the way (gamana). [551]

Though shy and retiring by nature, Veddas are always to be found in the vicinity of Sinhalese settlements; and that, for good reasons: Ceylon being but a small island, its remotest forests are easily accessible; more so in recent years when roads and railways have spread out their tentacles everywhere claiming from Nature her wildest solitudes. Any jungles that have not yet fallen a prey to planting enterprise owe it largely to their aridity and unhealthiness. Nowhere is there a spot in Ceylon to-day that is not within ten miles of some habitation. Besides, it is to the mutual advantage of both Vedda and Sinhalese to be near each other, for if the one can supply grain in days of dearth, the other can repay tenfold with flesh and honey in season. [177]

The Sinhalese affect an indulgent tolerance towards the Veddas, and aver them to be more of a nuisance than a help, saying the Veddas have to be kept alive when starving. The Vedda, on the other hand, will tell you that he is never in want; for the jungle, even in its worst months, is never totally devoid of food for him who knows where to find it: kanava and kotha combs are always there, and meat and yams of one sort or another. It must however be admitted, that the Veddas have a great partiality for what the unaided jungle cannot give—kurrakkan, maize, and tobacco. Rice is a welcome occasional meal to the Vedda, but he cannot do without kurrakkan; it takes much rice to fill the stomach, whereas a kurrakkan cake is like a stone, and even a small piece satisfies. [178]

A Sinhalese told us that if you gave a Vedda much by way of barter, he would never come near you again, but would go where the giving was more niggardly. (What a salve to the conscience!) We asked a Vedda if this was true: "Much they give us," he said; "though they are always ready enough to take all we give them—and more." [437]

In the bottom of their hearts the Veddas have a suspicion that the Sinhalese wish them no good. A Vedda, when asked how it was that their numbers had dwindled so, said, with simple faith, that it was due to the Sinhalese having killed out his people, by giving them charmed tobacco to eat, so that they died of disease or misadventure. The recent influenza epidemic fairly wiped out the last of the Veddas. [161] [186] [731]

403  
614



Boundary tree marked with bow mark or  
*dhuna hena*. (Page 79)

411



A Vedda archer of Hintenne. (Page 76)

[Facing p. 77]

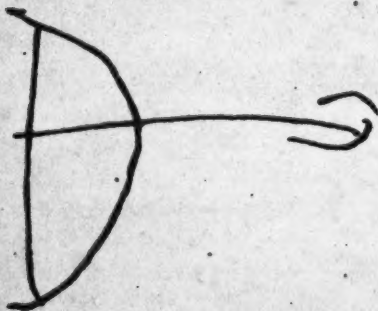
## 4. VEDDĀ JUNGLES

*The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them*

ISAIAH.

THE forests we were now in were the immemorial haunts of the Veddas of Bingoda, Galmede and Sittala Wanniya. They stretched from Bingoda to Newaragala, and included such famous Vedda hills as Walimbe (Friar's Hood) and Bandaradua. The Magalavatan Aar cleaves this country on its way to Unichi tank. The jungle is virginal, but one is surprised to find here an occasional guava bearing luscious fruit, and much wild cinnamon. *Palu* and *veera*, so abundant in the more southern forests, is wanting here. [137]

Nowhere is the Vedda more at home than in this wilderness, intersected by game trails only known to him and wild animals, and studded with the rocks that hold his caves. This land is all their wealth. By old Vedda law it is divided into *pangwas* or shares, marked off by such natural landmarks as streams, rocks, or conspicuous trees scored with the *dhuna hena* (bow mark) distorted beyond recognition with age. The *pangwas* of the Bingoda Veddas are six:—(1) Madana-gama; (2) Marana-pangua; (3) Kumburuwella-gama (kuda and maha); (4) Ringoda; (5) Kakalana-bokke; (6) Bandaradua. Of these, the first three are included under the name Galmede and are now the property of Suthu Banda; the last three are Kaurala's. Each



*Dhuna-hena* or bow mark drawn by Vedda

of these divisions, in days of greater prosperity, had its own chieftain.

It is to the credit of these Veddas that they alone of all the Veddas in Ceylon can still name their shares, indicate their boundaries, and observe the traditional law of non-transgression, hunting only in their allotted spheres. Suthu Banda, for instance, would not take the swiftlets' nests on Walimbe because they were Kaurala's by right; nor would he break the hives beyond Newaragala because those lands, once Vedda, have now lapsed to the Sinhalese.

Land goes to the eldest child whether son or daughter; failing them to the nephew. In the old days the proofs of inheritance were a white stone (*kirivanagala*) and molar tooth, bound together with a wisp of human hair; later the *ola* supplanted it; and still later a paper document issued by Government, and so carefully hidden away that it was invariably eaten by termites! These people, it would appear, were wiser than Government in their choice of a seizin. [p. 79]